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Quality Education In Ghana: The Way Forward

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Abstract:

It should be the hallmark of every government to ensure that quality education exists in her country since education is the major tool for national development. The aim of this paper is to examine the Ghanaian educational system with the view to bringing out some of the numerous challenges and constraints that hinder its quality and standard so that appropriate recommendations could be made to arrest some of the problems. It is a fact that Ghana has experienced various forms of education since pre-colonial era. It is without prejudice to say that as the various governments make such changes with the intentions of raising the quality of life of the people, the emerging quality of education inherent in the reforms seems to be a mirage. A review of the different education reform committee reports has been done. The study has also examined all the levels of educational hierarchy namely kindergarten, primary, junior high, senior high, technical/vocational and tertiary education levels. The major findings, which include inadequate standardized human and material resources, poor management and supervision, lack of funding and poor conditions of service for employees of the educational system culminate in low productivity. In view of these, pragmatic recommendations have been made to describe the way forward for the attention of all stakeholders in education.

Keywords: *Quality education, education reform, educational structure, assessment, development.*

1.Introduction

Education is geared towards the holistic development of a person. It aims at developing the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective modes of human development right from the Pre-school stage through to the Tertiary level of education. This enables pupils/students to think properly with the head, act with the hand and feel with the heart.

Hornby (1984) states that education is the process by which the mind develops through learning at school, college, or university. It adds that it is also the knowledge and skills that one gains from being taught. "Education" according to Encarta (2005) denotes the method by which a society hands down its knowledge, culture and values from one generation to the next. The educated individual develops physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially. The work of education may be accomplished by an individual, teacher, the family, a church or any other group in society. Philosophers and thinkers like Ghandi, Socrates, Plato, Dewey and Tamakloe have all defined education to tailor their philosophies in life. In its simplest form education can be explained as the enlightenment of an individual from darkness to light, thereby pushing away the frontiers of ignorance and discovering truth. Education can take place anywhere.

2.History Of Ghanaian Education

Education in Ghana started way back in pre-colonial times. This form of education was informal and indigenous where knowledge and skills were passed on from the elderly to the youth by word of mouth or by way of apprenticeship. It was backed by a strong socio-cultural milieu which ensured active participation in life. Western form of education was later introduced in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and according to Debrunner (1967) and McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975), this form of education took place in the 16th and 19th Centuries by European merchants and Christian missionaries respectively. The education was bookish and totally different from the indigenous education. It took place in "Fort schools" run by European merchants specifically for their mulatto children. They introduced reading, writing, and arithmetic as an essential and integral part of their education and aimed at producing educated local people to work as storekeepers and clerks in commerce, industry, and government. Western education by Christian missionaries was considered an important weapon in teaching and spreading of Christianity. Shortly before and after independence, the indigenous government introduced several educational programmes aimed at establishing more schools throughout the country and to extend financial assistance to

unassisted schools, as well as improve the quality of education in the country. However, some of the measures introduced by the government brought several problems in the educational system and the recent Education Reform was designed to overcome anomalies in the system. In 1973, the Government of Ghana felt the need to reform the bookish nature of Ghanaian education to make it more practically oriented. This consequently led to the establishment of the Dzobo Committee to restructure the content to make it more practical and more related to Ghanaian culture. This was to enable the individual to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the country. Thus, in 1974, the restructured content of education introduced new programmes that were approved and implemented by the then Government. The reform was to be effected in Kindergarten, Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary Schools but due to financial constraints facing the country the reform programme remained only at the embryonic stage. In 1981, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Government reviewed the 1974 education reform with the same vision of making it more practical and more related to Ghanaian culture and way of life. In 1994 and 2002, the deHeer Ammisah Committee and the Anamuah-Mensah Committee respectively reviewed the Education Reform. They took into consideration the structure and content of the then educational system in order to identify the anomalies in the system and how best to correct them to ultimately promote quality education. The rationale for the new Education Reform is thus to provide holistic and quality education to the individual. This would enable products of education to be self-fulfilled and help contribute productively to the socio-economic development of the country. In the light of this, it is imperative to take a critical look at the newly reformed education system in Ghana and discuss how best quality education can be achieved.

3. Structure Of Education In Ghana

The present education in Ghana runs through Basic school education up to Tertiary education. The Basic education system covers a period of nine (9) years consisting of six (6) year Primary school education and three (3) year Junior High School education. This is followed by four (4) years of Senior High School education or Technical and Vocational Education. From this level one may then enter a Tertiary educational institution to pursue further studies from three (3) to four (4) years as may be specified in the various programmes. Tertiary education in Ghana consists of Universities and

Colleges, as well as Polytechnics, Institutes and Post Secondary institutions offering courses leading to the award of diplomas and degrees.

4. Kindergarten (Pre-School) Education

Kindergarten education is a type of pre-school education incorporated into Basic education where children, aged 4, are introduced for the very first time to formal education for two (2) years. The early years of the child known as the formative years are very crucial for the physical and physiological development. These years are also critical for the stimulation of intelligence, personality formation and the instillation of positive social behaviours in children.

Pre-school education also aims at inculcating in the child the desire for learning and helps reinforce primary education through the provision of quality pre-school education. There is therefore the need to create an environment, which is safe and caring by providing the right infrastructural amenities to help the proper nurturing of the child.

5. Primary Education

Primary education follows after pre-school education. It aims, among others, at strengthening the knowledge and skills acquired during the kindergarten level as well as lay the foundation for inquiry, creativity, innovation and preparing pupils for further education and training. Primary education covers a period of six (6) years, which is divided into two stages to reflect the stages of growth and development in the child. The first stage being the Lower primary is made up of three (3) years and the second stage, which is the Upper primary, also covers three (3) years. Children from ages 6-8 are supposed to go through the Lower primary while those from ages 9-11 are to be in Upper primary. During the first three years at the lower primary level, children are to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills from concrete experiences. The last three years at the upper primary level, are to help and encourage children to observe and think critically, criticise, ask questions, solve problems and learn new knowledge.

6. Junior High School Education

Junior High School Education which comprises three years follows soon after Primary School Education. As part of Basic Education in Ghana, it is to provide opportunities for pupils to discover their interests, abilities, and aptitudes. Junior High School Education introduces pupils to basic scientific and technological knowledge and skills and prepares

them for further academic work. The main objectives of the Junior High School programmes are to make sure that pupils appreciate the use of the cognitive and psychomotor domains of learning, help pupils acquire pre-technical, pre-vocational skills that will help them consolidate knowledge and skills acquired at the primary level. Lack of guidance at the Junior High School level has resulted in pupils' inability to select appropriate programmes to pursue at the Senior High School level. This situation places pupils from rural and sub-urban communities at a great disadvantage and if not checked would continue to perpetuate the elitist education, which the government rightly seeks to arrest.

7. Senior High School Education

Senior High School education in Ghana is an extremely important one. It is the next secondary education offered to students after pursuing programmes at the Junior High School (Basic level). Senior High School provides a comprehensive education for students with the principal objective of strengthening the knowledge and skills acquired during the Basic Education level, as well as preparing students for further education and training in tertiary institutions. Senior High School education also introduces students to a variety of relevant occupational skills necessary for human and national development. It also aims at helping students appreciate the environment and the need to sustain it, and inculcate a sense of discipline and selflessness in students. Additionally, it helps develop an interest for life-long learning in students. It is at the Senior High School level that some form of specialization takes place and it is from here that specialized training colleges and other institutions tend to admit students. The curriculum at this level is thus diversified to cater for the different aptitudes, abilities, interests and skills of students.

The Senior High School system has had its ups and downs since the implementation of the 1987 Education Reform programme and was running for 3-year duration. It has attracted the most criticism (including whether it should be 3-years or 4-years duration) and so much attention should be placed on the Senior High School programme and all efforts made to work, since it serves as preparatory grounds for entry into tertiary institutions.

8. Technical And Vocational Education

The purpose of Technical and Vocational Education and Training as indicated in the Anamuah-Mensah Committee Report is to give a basic understanding of technical and

vocational knowledge and skills for students who wish to pursue professional tertiary programmes. They impart specific technical and vocational knowledge and skills to students who want to contribute to the world of work, equip students with knowledge and skills to make them employable or self-employed, and to update knowledge and skills of the workforce in order to keep them abreast with time. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training sub-sector of the Ghanaian economy is supposed to help contribute much to the socio-economic development of the country. Presently, streams in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training include Secondary Technical Schools, Technical Institutes, Vocational Institutes and Apprenticeship Training Centres.

9. Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is education that is offered after the secondary level. It includes universities, polytechnics, Colleges of Education, specialized institutions and other institutions offering training leading to awards of diplomas and degrees. Tertiary education aims at developing people with intellectual and analytical mind, equipping people with knowledge and skills to conduct basic and applied research, and to produce high and middle-level human capital for the various sectors of the economy. In the present knowledge based economy, tertiary education plays an important role in the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge to meet developmental needs. It also has a role in the strengthening of the entire educational system and fostering synergies in the entire economy. To achieve the objectives of tertiary education, the well-being and economic development of the country, it is very crucial to strengthen all the various levels of the country's educational system by remedying all anomalies and deficiencies to ensure quality education delivery in the system. Buama (2009) confirms that the success of tertiary education depends to a very large extent on the preparation given by students from the Basic and Secondary levels of education and that without quality basic education it will be difficult to have quality tertiary education.

10. Quality Education

Quality education is very crucial in every educational system. In Ghana, quality education is of utmost interest to the government, Ministry of Education (MOE), Ghana Education Service (GES) and Cooperate bodies. It involves putting the right mechanisms

in place such as providing quality inputs and delivery in the educational process to help achieve excellent outcomes in education. Ghanaian education is centred on providing a holistic and quality approach to education by creating well-balanced individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and aptitudes for the purpose of self-realization and for the socio-economic development and political transformation of the country. To achieve this, the individual being educated should be developed intellectually, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, physically and intuitively in order to positively contribute towards national development and adapt to technological changes and other innovations. The Ghana government, as part of her vision towards education, aims at providing quality education for all by way of providing adequate resources and facilities to achieve her goal at all levels of education. It is thus, very relevant to create an environment that will help promote and sustain quality delivery in the Ghanaian educational system. Teaching and learning should as a result take place in an environment that is healthy, safe and sound and gender sensitive with adequate resources and facilities. Quality education delivery further involves the process through which trained and motivated teachers use child-centred approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools in addition to skilful assessment, effective use of time, right attitude towards learning, effective supervision, and good discipline not forgetting other factors such as the effective use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning.

There are however some factors militating against achieving quality education in the present Ghanaian educational system, which need to be addressed. The research indicates some of the militating factors as follows:

- Lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities.
- Poor infrastructural facilities
- Low number of well-motivated and committed teachers owing to unattractive salaries and conditions of service.
- Inadequate number of trained and well-motivated teachers to promote quality education.
- Absence of proper guidance and counselling services especially at the Junior High School level.
- Absence of performance standards for each subject.
- Overloaded curriculum especially at the Senior High School level.
- High pupil/teacher ratio, especially in cities and sub-urban areas.

- Mass or wholesale promotion at the basic level.
- Ineffective use of contact hours.
- Too much pressure on the few endowed schools in the urban areas.
- Poor management and supervision in schools by heads and education officers.
- Lack of funding for educational institutions.

11.Recommendations

For quality education to be achieved in the present education system in Ghana, the following recommendations can be considered to provide the way forward:

11.1.Teaching And Learning Facilities

The Government, in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service, should see to the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, stationery, computers, televisions, tape recorders, overhead and LCD projectors. These facilities should not only be sufficient in number, but should also be of good quality. Special facilities for the physically and mentally disabled should also be provided in the appropriate institutions. Non-Governmental Organizations and other institutions as well as Parent/Teacher Associations should assist in the provision of teaching and learning materials through various donations to respective educational institutions as a way of enhancing and promoting teaching and learning. Governing boards of the various institutions should institute appropriate measures of ensuring that such donated facilities are properly maintained in a manner consistent with acceptable standards.

11.2.Infrastructural Facilities

The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) should see to the provision of good infrastructural facilities in all educational institutions as a way of providing the right environment for quality education to thrive. These facilities include adequate number of classrooms, science laboratories, art studios, workshops, well-stocked libraries, dormitories, hostels, staff accommodation and good drinking water plants. The provision of these facilities is relevant to create an environment conducive for quality delivery at all levels in the educational process. The government and all other stakeholders should pay particular attention in providing most of these amenities at the Junior High School level since it is considered the weakest link in the educational system

due to its neglect in the provision of these services. The rural and sub-urban areas should not be neglected in the provision of these facilities, in order to compete with the urban schools. This would go a long way to help improve education delivery in community-based Junior and Senior High Schools and would also attract more students from a wide catchment area to facilitate access and participation.

11.3. Personnel Policies

Morphet (1974) states that the effectiveness of an organization is enhanced by selecting the competent, training the inexperienced, eliminating the incompetent and providing incentives for all members of the organization. Ideally, all teachers handling the various levels of education should be professionally qualified with a minimum qualification of at least a first degree or a Diploma at the pre-tertiary level to ensure quality delivery. In other words, highly trained teachers should teach at the lower levels to lay a strong foundation. To achieve this, the Government through the Ministry of Education (MOE), should formulate appropriate policies concerning the upgrading and well-being of teachers as well as see to the provision of attractive salaries and good conditions of service such as good accommodation, transportation facilities, risk and other allowances to make the profession very attractive and productive. The Government of Ghana has said that there shall be a special rural allowance of an additional 20 percent of salaries to teachers who accept postings to deprived rural communities starting from 2010 financial year (Khalid, 2009). It will be appreciated if this is carried out accordingly.

11.4. Training Of Teachers

The quality, effectiveness and attitudes of the teaching force rest heavily on two factors: the type of person recruited to the service and the quality of the pre-service and in-service training they receive (Kadingdi, 1996). For quality education to thrive, it is necessary to ensure that teachers are appropriately trained to effectively impart relevant knowledge and skills to pupils/students. To achieve this, the Government in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) should pass policies that would help revive as well as fund teacher education. This would be of relevance to the nation because the success of every education depends on the quality of teachers provided by the system. The structure and content of teacher education should thus be reformed and made responsive to the current educational needs of the country. Teacher training institutions should, as a matter of urgency, incorporate kindergarten (Pre-school), Primary and Junior

High School education in their teacher education programmes to groom trainees to handle these levels which are very important in the early development of the child.

Colleges of Education or Teacher Training Institutions should also train more teachers to handle Technical and Vocational subjects at Junior High School level and schools that offer purely Technical and Vocational programmes so that products from these schools shall be well equipped to handle the technical and vocational sector of the Ghanaian economy. Teacher education should also be made attractive through the provision of incentives such as accommodation, maintenance allowances to cover boarding and lodging, payment of allowances for teacher trainees, teaching and learning materials and other amenities. These would motivate more people to be trained as teachers.

11.5. Technical And Vocational Education

The Technical and Vocational Education should be carefully considered and reviewed with the view to restructuring it in order to define educational streams available to Junior and Senior High School leavers to pursue. The Government, in collaboration with Ghana Education Service (GES), should see to the expansion of institutions and streams within the Technical and Vocational Education to make it all-embracing so that they can cater for the large numbers of Junior and Senior High School leavers. This would help reduce the number of school drop-outs and lessen the number of students admitted to the Senior High Schools who may not even have interest for Senior High School education.

11.6. Guidance And Counselling

Guidance and counselling services should be provided and strengthened at the Junior High School level so that students would be well equipped as to what their talents, future aspirations and prospects are. This would help alleviate the problem of selection of programmes for the Senior High School. Children in the early stages of schooling need to be guided to discover and develop their natural talents as well as to choose their subjects, professional requirements and employment prospects. An effective guidance/counselling programme includes planned programmes and activities based on the needs of students, that result in student outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes in areas of personal/social, educational and career development. The process of planning should involve key stakeholders, including students, school staff, families and community in a meaningful way.

11.7. Performance Standards

It is noteworthy that assessment as a measure of quality of learning is very critical in every educational system. The educational system should thus put in place a variety of assessment systems and tools such as Performance Monitoring Test, Criterion Referenced Test, and School Based Assessment at the pre-tertiary education level to measure students' abilities and as a means of monitoring their progress. There should be effective supervision of subjects through School Based Assessment, which is commonly used in schools. It should include essay writing, quizzes, interviews, practical works at workshops and laboratories, project works as well as systematic observation by teachers to ensure that all levels and domains of learning are well assessed.

11.8. Review Of Curricula

The educational curricula should be carefully reviewed to get rid of irrelevant subjects, and subject contents and combinations. Subject combinations that would not contribute much to students' learning as well as create a linkage between the various levels of the educational system should be eliminated. The schools' curricula should emphasize the application of relevant knowledge students have acquired in the classroom, workshops, studios and laboratories. The curricula should as a consequence include skills that are practical and job-oriented, cater for special needs and interests of pupils/students. They should also promote activities that deal with problem solving, creative and analytical thinking as well as incorporate indigenous and formal sector activities. These would enable graduates become self-fulfilled and make meaningful contributions to the socio-economic development of the country.

11.9. Intake Of Students

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2005) states that any policy aimed at pushing net enrolments towards 100% must also assure decent learning conditions and opportunities. It is generally good to increase enrolments but it should commensurate with adequate resources and motivation. The high numbers of students in a class, especially in urban schools should be addressed by the recruitment of more teachers to teach in deprived areas to alleviate the problem of students leaving their village schools to urban schools. The Government should also see to the provision of model Junior and Senior High Schools in rural and sub-urban communities to increase access and participation.

11.10.Promotion Of Students

Mass or wholesale promotion has been a major problem hampering the success of achieving quality education especially at the basic level. Through mass promotion pupils/students are allowed to automatically proceed from one class to the next. This does not promote hard work, seriousness and discipline on the part of pupils/students. This eventually leads to poor performances in examinations. With this system the pace of learning is measured and determined by the few good and fast learners in a class leaving the slow learners to their own fate. This problem could be resolved by allowing weak students to repeat classes to consolidate knowledge not well understood for better performance in their next class when promoted. However, repeating a student should be done with justifications.

11.11.Management And Supervision

Heads of all educational institutions should see to the proper and effective management and supervision of their schools on a daily basis by putting the right organizational structures and mechanisms in place. Heads should make sure they monitor and supervise instructional time, co-curricula activities, teaching and learning processes time after time to ensure that the right subjects and their contents are taught. Besides, the head should monitor the use of right pedagogical skills, assessment of teachers' and students' performances in the instructional process, and the effective use of instructional time. They should also manage financial resources of their schools effectively with the aim of seeing to the proper running of the school system. Educational officers who are adequately trained should be assigned to pay visits to various educational institutions to supervise and evaluate management and academic activities of these schools to be sure they are operating well and in line with educational policies of the Government and the Ministry of Education (MOE). The Government, Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ghana Education Service (GES) should thus support these educational officers with the appropriate incentives, logistics and adequate transport services to make their job effective.

11.12.Funding Of Educational Institutions

The Government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's), private sectors and other stakeholders in education should help in funding educational institutions to ensure a proper manning of those institutions in order to achieve their educational objectives.

12. Conclusion

Quality education has been found to be very crucial in the present educational system of Ghana and of utmost interest to the government. The study has unveiled most of the setbacks to achieving quality education in the present Ghanaian system of education. If these setbacks and deficiencies of the system are properly addressed by taking into consideration most of the recommendations put forward, it would go a long way to help achieve quality education in the entire educational system of Ghana.

Education is not a one-man affair. It is a joint responsibility of the state, and the entire community. A healthy partnership between the government and all other stakeholders is therefore essential for improving and sustaining the educational system.

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